

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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"A LEAL LASS."

By RICHARD ASHE KING.

CHAPTER VI.

FRED.

If May could have seen Fred when her letter reached him, her misgivings about it would have been much more than confirmed. He tore it open as he lay in bed, to look greedily for the cheque, which he extracted, read, and flung on the floor with a curse. The letter itself he tossed aside unread, until he had dressed and breakfasted, when he took it up impatiently and glanced through it with disgust.

He felt sorely ill-used. What had he gone to college for? To please his father and "his people"—for he most assuredly did not want to go there himself—and here was their return! In college a fellow had to live with other fellows and like other fellows, and this could not be done on nothing a year. As he came here to please them, the least they could do was to support him here suitably.

Fred seemed always to consider his future—his prospects or profession—as none of his own concern at all, but his father's solely. The present, indeed, was Fred's so entirely and exclusively, that it was monstrous to expect him to give up any of it, either in study or otherwise, to this future, which was his father's look-out entirely and exclusively. Fred did not, of course, think the thing out in this precise way; but, what he did think about it, came to this pretty precisely.

Yet, underneath this sincere sense of sore ill-usage—so entirely underneath it as to be smothered out of sight and felt only vaguely—was a vague feeling of disgust at

his own ill-usage of his father, especially in that matter which was hinted at in May's letter.

Now, to be disgusted with yourself, makes you as irritable as suppressed gout, since there is no outside vent for its relief; and Fred was roused into a state of extreme irritation by poor May's mild letter.

He was not, therefore, in the happiest humour for receiving an unwelcome visitor; yet, though no visitor could have been more unwelcome than the gentleman who presented himself immediately after breakfast, Fred received this Mr. Dredge with even more than his usual genial effusiveness.

"Have some breakfast?"

"No, thanks," replied Mr. Dredge, a shift-eyed young gentleman, who glanced at everything in the room, with the furtive and ill-used look of a fresh caught and caged monkey.

"A brandy and soda? Eh?" Fred asked, and without waiting for the certain assent of his guest, he proceeded to get out the soda-water and brandy.

Mr. Dredge, still seemingly looking everywhere for some outlet of escape, said surlily: "You haven't got it."

"Got it?" Fred asked innocently.

"You haven't, you know," rejoined Mr. Dredge doggedly, as though contradicting an assertion of Fred's. "You wouldn't wag your tail like that if you had," he added sagaciously, comparing Fred's effusive demonstrations to those of a dog deprecating chastisement.

"Oh, you mean that money," Fred answered with a not altogether successful attempt to dissimulate the fear and fury in his heart.

"I do; I mean it, mind you," retorted Dredge, furious also, but undisguisedly so,

not without reason from his own point of view. "Look here, Beresford; it's no good beating about the bush or dodging behind: you've been promising that money for more than a month——"

"And paying it, too," Fred interrupted him to say sullenly.

"At the rate of the National Debt," sneered Dredge; "but I am not likely to live so long as that on this stuff," he said, taking a pull at the brandy and soda. "You promised to pay me fifty pounds to-day without fail, and I promised to pay it to-day without fail to Smithers. Have you got it?"

"I haven't," Fred answered defiantly in an uncontrollable outburst of irritation, for Mr. Dredge's manner was maddening.

Mr. Dredge drank at a draught the rest of the brandy and soda, rose, and taking up his hat and stick with studied deliberation and looking round the room at every object in it except Fred himself, said: "I shall do what I can for you with Smithers, but nothing that I can do will make him wait beyond Saturday." Without another word Mr. Dredge turned and left the room.

Upon his departure Fred paced the room in a frenzy of mingled fear and fury; his fear growing as his fury sank. It was hardly more than six months since his father had come up to extricate him from an exceedingly ugly gambling scrape, and here was another at least as ugly and as desperate. He dared not disclose it even to his father. Yet how, without disclosing it, could he extract from his father this fifty pounds ransom? Or, would his father even be able to command such a sum on so short a notice? As Fred shrank with a shudder of aversion from making a full confession to his father, he found it easy to persuade himself that such a confession would avail him nothing, since his father could not send him such a sum at an hour's notice. He would have had no doubt of his father's ability to raise thrice the sum at as short a notice, if a confession had not been in question; but the idea of confession was so abhorrent to him that he was glad to look away from it, to find any other reason for shrinking from an application to his father.

Failing his father, he must try his friends—a forlorn hope; for he was in debt already to those of them who were the likeliest to be at once able and willing to help him. However, he must make the attempt; and he did with the result of

reducing his friends to his own bankrupt state, instead of bettering this estate by their help.

Thus Fred found his pennilessness infectious as the plague; for everyone he approached caught it at once and became as impecunious as himself—everyone with the exception of Gower.

Gower was not a generous young man, but he had for Fred the calf-infatuation of a schoolboy for a hero, who seems to him pre-eminent in all the manly virtues—smoking, drinking, gambling, "et hoc genus omne." Fred's assured and easy manner captivated Gower, who was shy while Fred's effusive affectation of generosity imposed completely upon his friend. Fred was always effusive in offering to do anything not wanted, or to serve any one in need of nothing; and he had, besides, a deftness in palming off his most self-regarding acts as done in the sole interest of a friend.

But if Gower was so taken in by his friend, Fred, on his part, misunderstood Gower. Having for him the contempt he felt for other worshippers, he had not the least idea of his real character; for nothing—in this matter of insight into character—is so blinding as contempt. Fred noticed nothing more in Gower than he would have noticed in the dog at his heel, which was fawning, tractable, and companionable—as was Gower. He knew so much of the dog at his heel as touched himself—the least part of his character, that is—and of his friend's character he knew and suspected no more. To him Gower was credulous, humble, yielding, easy-going, and good-natured; and Fred had not the least suspicion that his friend was as selfish as himself; was obstinate as a mule; had plenty of that short-sighted animal cleverness called cunning; and, in spite of his shyness, had a very excellent opinion indeed of himself. Since shyness indicates only excess of self-consciousness, it goes quite as often with conceit as with humility; and the shyest men of all are those whose seeming diffidence is due to their dread of giving others a lower opinion of them than they have of themselves. Anyhow, Augustus Gower's shyness was consistent, not only with conceit, but with a kind of secret coxcombry.

Fred found him in his rooms, which were a sort of photographic zenana, for the beauties of the shop-windows covered their walls. Gower was a devout, though distant, adorer of female loveliness; and not

the least of Fred's titles to his admiration was the envied ease of his friend's manners and of his conquests when the sex was concerned.

"Thought I'd look you up, old chap; haven't seen you for an age," Fred said in his cheery manner and with a seemingly disengaged mind.

Gower, an uninteresting-looking youth, tall, fair, with grey-blue eyes, sandy hair, a narrow forehead, a rabbit mouth ever agape, and a rather receding chin, was greatly pleased by Fred's visit. It was an unusual honour, since he sought Fred in his rooms a dozen times for once that Fred sought him. Fred, having submitted to be made comfortable in an easy-chair and with a good cigar, opened the campaign warily after his manner.

"It's well to be you," he said, after a few puffs, taking the cigar from his mouth to look at it appreciatively.

"Why?" asked Gower, flattered by the envy of the envied.

"You don't know what it is to be hard up for one thing. It's like being shut into a sentry-box where you can neither stir nor breathe—infernal thing!" exclaimed Fred fretfully. "But, besides," he hastened to add, as though in fear of his friend's offering him help; "but, besides, you know how to make the most of money. How many fellows would give me such a weed as that?" he said, taking it from between his lips and knocking the ash off its end; "and some of 'em are just rotten with money."

"Thought you'd like it," replied Gower complacently. "It's one of Jessop's 'BB's.'"

"You'd be a long time coming to my rooms before you'd get a weed like this there. That's the worst of being poor, hang it! One wouldn't mind so much for oneself, if one could treat one's friends decently without getting into debt and those duns at one's throat."

This he spake with an emphasis which left no doubt at all of its being a personal and pressing experience.

"Who is it? Finch?" Gower asked, elated to find himself for the first time in the relation of Nestor to the accomplished Fred.

"Oh, I'm not going to bother you about it," Fred replied magnanimously. "I owe you enough as it is."

"Is it much?"

"I might scrape through with a pony," replied Fred, with the usual debtor's disinclination to state his liabilities in full,

which not even the assurance of having them at once wiped out can overcome. Of course Fred had not such assurance or even hope. If he could get twenty-five pounds from Gower he might manage to scrape the rest together somehow; but even in Gower's contribution he was disappointed.

"A pony! I couldn't do more than a tenner at the outside."

"Oh hang it! it's too bad to come down always on you, only because you're such a good fellow."

"I'm good for a tenner anyway; I only wish it was more, old chap; but I'm nearly aground myself."

Hereupon Gower, having endorsed a cheque of his father's for eight pounds, handed it over to Fred with a couple of sovereigns wrapped up in it. Fred thanked him effusively, and waited to finish his cigar before he took his leave.

He returned slowly to his rooms, consumed by a sense of ill-usage. In all Cambridge he sincerely thought there was no more unlucky, unfairly treated and unhappy victim of circumstances, and of ingrate friends than himself; yet in all Cambridge, perhaps, there was no one deeper in the debt of his friends for unreturned kindnesses of all sorts.

As Fred neared his rooms in this mood, relentless Fortune dealt him such another blow as might have suggested to a much more patient person that he was pursued by the Furies. A little greasy man, with a blotched face and bleary eyes, who had been prowling about like a skulking hyæna in wait for its prey, made at once for Fred as he came in sight, approaching him not at all hyæna-fashion, but with a calculated audacity.

"Mr. Beresford?" he asked. "I am Mr. Pratt," he went on with an assumption of dignity in preposterous contrast to his appearance.

"Pattie Pratt's father!" thought Fred with a sinking heart. He had flattered himself that Pattie was one of his conquests, till he suddenly discovered that he was one of hers.

"May I ask, Mr. Beresford, if this is your handwriting, or not?" taking a packet of letters from his breast pocket with the browbeating air of a cross-examining counsel.

"No, it isn't," Fred retorted flatly, after a glance at the packet. He was so intensely relieved as to feel almost forgivingly towards the greasy little bully he had baffled.

The little man was chucked up suddenly upon his haunches, as it were; but only for a moment. Replacing the packet hastily in some confusion in one pocket, he took from another a similar budget.

"No, sir; those are not yours; they are from—from my lawyer, sir—from my lawyer," he reiterated, as having not only recovered his footing, but gained a more commanding position. His lawyer, however, must have corresponded with him through his daughter, to whom the letters were addressed. "These, sir—these are the documents I mean," he said, slapping with one hand packet number two, which he held in the other, and using what he considered legal language.

Fred, albeit not given to shamefacedness, coloured to the roots of the hair, and then grew suddenly white as he thought of the language of these letters.

"What do you want for them?" he asked hoarsely, losing all presence of mind.

"Sir, I am her father!" replied the little man, with an over-acted and almost grotesque assumption of outraged feeling.

"Yes," Fred rejoined impatiently, understanding him to make merely an auctioneer's puff to raise the bidding.

"I have a father's feelin's," retorted Pratt now, with a display of real indignation.

"How much for them?" asked Fred irritably, meaning, of course, not the feelings, but the letters.

But Pratt, knowing that he had the whip-hand of Fred, was now greatly enraged by what appeared to him the studied insolence of the young man's manner.

"How much for 'em? You'll know how much for 'em before you're a day older! Do you hear? There's them that will tell you how much you'll get for 'em without your axing; and I hope you'll like what you'll get, you infernal young black-guard!" he cried, with a sudden outburst of fury, which served his purpose infinitely better than his maudlin assumption of outraged fatherly feeling.

If he carried out his threat Fred was certainly and utterly ruined. Of this he had no doubt at all. When Pratt hurried away, therefore, Fred followed him:

"Look here," he said breathlessly, as he came up with him. "I didn't mean to offend you—I was worried about something. Come to my rooms and let us talk it over—I mean, I want to explain

and to apologise, if you will come to my rooms."

Pratt, with much show of sullen reluctance was induced to turn back with him.

"A father has his feelin's, young man, even if he is in the oil and colour trade," he said with much-offended dignity, as he walked back with Fred; who found these feelings an expensive article. It needed a good deal of brandy, and some diplomacy, to bring Pratt to state his terms, which Fred was horrified to find were the same as those demanded by Dredge. It was not, however, as he imagined, a mere coincidence that these two harpies should swoop down on him at the same time and for the same sum, since it was Dredge's indiscreet babbling that suggested to Pattie and her father the idea of forestalling him.

PARISH BOOKS.

FIVE years ago a Bill was brought into the Commons, to transfer the care of the parish books from the parsons to the Master of the Rolls. It was put aside for the present, like almost everything else, because "the Irish Question blocks the way." When we get the road clear, it is one of the first things that must come on; for, though so much mischief has been done already that to make a change is a little like locking the stable door when the steed is stolen, still, the registers, though safe nowadays from more active agents of destruction, are not seldom kept in boxes so damp that every year the writing on the parchment becomes paler and paler.

The clergy have generally respected the fabric of the church; but for the books they have had, in most cases, very scant regard. Read the Report of the House of Commons Committee, in 1835, and you will find that one sporting parson cut his parchment leaves into labels for the game that he sent to his friends.

The Huntingdon Peerage Case was sorely perplexed, because many leaves from the books of Christchurch, Hants, had been used by a Curate's wife to line kettleholders.

Then there were the frequent frauds: the old novelists' stock trick of taking out a leaf or putting one in, had facts enough to justify it. The Duchess of Kingston did both; and she certainly had not a monopoly of that kind of thing.

Then, there was carelessness in entering. Many parsons still keep the books in their studies; and, instead of entering each event at once, allow the clerk to put them on a sheet of paper, or day-book, whence they are supposed to be copied in periodically.* In the copying, omissions were often made; thus, in Saint Saviour's, anciently Saint Mary Overies, Southwark, both the book and the loose sheets for the earlier part of the seventeenth century are preserved. The latter gives, "1625, August twenty-ninth; John Fletcher, a poet, bur. in the church, with an afternoon's knell of the great bell;" the former, copied in when the memory of Beaumont's fellow-worker was growing dim, simply says, "1625, August twenty-ninth. Mr. John Fletcher, a man, bur. in the church."

A more important omission came out in the case—well known to lawyers—of May versus May. In the day-book, the plaintiff was entered as "base-born;" but in the register this epithet was omitted, and the Court ruled that "there cannot be two registers in one parish, and therefore that the false entry which implied plaintiff's legitimacy, must prevail." In another case it was decided that the clerk's notes are no evidence at all, and that, therefore, the entry of a baptism dated February, 1776, but not copied in till more than a year after, could not be received. Indeed, so general was the distrust in what ought to be as trustworthy as a bond, that such a staunch Tory as Lord Eldon said: "Not one register in a hundred is kept according to law;" and another law-lord added: "You may well go further, and say not one is kept legally."

Of course one expects mis-spellings. Open almost any register and you may pick them out by the dozen. I remember once in West Cornwall tracing the variations of a local name—Warren; besides Wearne, Waring, Wearing, there were at least three more that I have forgotten, and all in the same century. The four variations which Mr. Chester Waters gives from Kensington parish church of the name of Methold, founder of Methold's Almshouses—one of those landmarks swept away by the Metropolitan Railway—Meathell, Mathowld, etc., all occur in less than forty years; and are

* This system gave rise to a ludicrous notion of clerical longevity. The parson signed the copies, and in some cases these extend over eighty or ninety years; during which time some have gravely asserted the signer's life extended.

explainable, because the Norfolk village, after which this first English visitor to Golconda (see Purchase's "Pilgrims," vol. v.) was named, is often locally pronounced Mewold.

I hope the confusing entry which registered Mr. Anchetil Grey as Miss Anne Kettle Grey is an extreme case; as doubtless is that which may be seen in the parish book of Kirkby Moorside: "1687. Georges vilans, Lord dooke of bookingham. bur. 17 Apl." That was the finale of the scene which Pope describes "in the worst inn's worst room."

Had the Bishops insisted on the seventieth canon (of 1603) being carried out, there would be fewer gaps in our genealogies. The canon provided that all existing registers should be transcribed on parchment, and the copies placed in the registry of each diocese; and also that every year a copy of all the entries in all parish-books should be sent in to the respective Bishops.

Unhappily, though the canons were not only passed in Convocation summoned by King's writ, but were also confirmed by King's writ, they were in this case seldom acted on. Who was to make the transcripts? It was nobody's business, i.e. no one could claim any fee for doing it: the parish would seldom be at the cost of it; and the Bishops were indignant at the idea of their paying. The King's Bench decided that the canon was binding on the clergy, but not "proprio vigore" (whatever that might mean) on the laity. The parsons, however, seldom obeyed, and nobody troubled himself to make them do so. Perhaps they felt that, in the state into which Bishops' registries had been allowed to fall, it was a farce to send up documents, the chief value of which depended on their being ready for immediate consultation. "Dry rubbish to be shot here" might well be the motto on those registries which were not quite as damp as some vestries and church chests.

Not till 1812 were the Bishops invited by the Privy Council to survey their registries, and to think over a plan of payment for having the contents arranged and indexed. Not a single report has ever been sent in, and the registers, says Mr. Waters, remain as they were. I can testify to the condition of two, on opposite sides of England.

From a West-country rectory garden a corner had clearly, at one time—not very remote, to judge by the foundation of an

old wall—been snipped off, and joined to that of the next neighbour; but all efforts to get at the old "terrier" were in vain. It was as safe in the registry, as the sailor's "kettle at the bottom of the sea." In another case, a yearly charge, called "fee-farm rent," is paid out of the tithes of a Norfolk parish; but when this alienation was made, whether it dates from Henry VIII.'s day, or whether some needy Rector, in the bad times, took that way of raising money there are no documents to show; and appeals to the Registrar bring the unsatisfactory reply: "You're welcome to come and search for yourself," with as much chance of succeeding as the sailor would have had, if he had taken a header after the lost kettle. Bishops' registries, however, though in such a state of chaos and in spite of the gaps in their contents, have sometimes proved of good service. Where there is enough at stake people will even plunge into chaos; or, if they feel it is no use taking a header, they will get a diving bell and explore the sea-floor square inch by square inch.

Hence, in the Angell case, where something like a million sterling was at stake, the diocesan registry was searched, the transcript found, and the labouring man, who, having in the Parish Book altered Margaret Ange to Marriott Angell, was discomfited by the evidence of the Bishop's transcript. He had won the first trial, when it occurred to somebody that this might be one of those cases in which the canon had been obeyed.

In the Leigh peerage case, in like manner, a baptism which had been expunged from the parish books of Wigan, was found in the Bishop's transcript, and by its presence decided the suit.

Defacing the registers was sometimes a cheap luxury.

In Norborough, Northampton, the pages from 1613 to 1646 are wanting, the reason being explained by a subsequent entry, that "one Mr. John Claypole, a factious gentleman, caused the register to be taken away from one John Stoughton, then rector." This factious gentleman was Cromwell's son-in-law; and, I hope he made good the two pounds ten shillings which the Ecclesiastical Court of St. Martin's granted to the Rector as satisfaction for the temporary loss of the book, and which was paid at the charge of the parish. The punishment seems slight enough; but Roundheads had it much more their own way in that neighbourhood than in Maid's

Moreton, Bucks, for instance, where the post-Restoration entry vouches "on the word of a Priest, that, despite the laws to the contrary made since the worst of Parliaments wickedly rebelled against the best of Princes, no child was withheld from Church baptism, and no couple came together till they were solemnly wedded in the church, according to the orders of the Church of England." Of very few parishes could that be said; and even in Moreton the register was not kept, because "one, called Colonel Purefoy, carried away what he could and hid the register."

This is the invariable excuse for the gap which so generally occurs at that time: "the tymes were such." But for other gaps there is a less valid reason. At Tunstall, in Kent, we read "1577, Mary Pottman nat. (born) and bapt. 15 April; Mary Pottman, nat. and bapt. 29 June; Mary Pottman dep., (buried) 22 Aug. From henceforward I omit the Pottmans." They were too many for this parson's patience.

At Stoke Newington, from 1617 to 1619 is marked as "a long vacation."

At St. Peter's, Dorchester, "1645. In 12 months died 52 persons, whose names are not inserted, the old clerk being dead who had the notes."

Still, with all its irregularities, the old system is poorly replaced by the cut-and-dried formality of that which came in in 1835. The parson used to look on the parish book as his diary, sometimes even as his commonplace book. If he was of a reserved turn he kept his feelings to himself, only allowing himself the luxury of a "laus deo" at the birth, without accident, of one of his own children. If he was cynical, he put down burial entries like this:

"Bitteswell, Leicester, 1638. Mary Snelson is stark naught, stinking naught. Blot not this."

And this:

"Sea Salter, Kent, 1734. John Housden, widower, a gape-mouthed, lazy fellow, and Hannah Matthews, not a pont, a toothless wriggling hag, were trammelled by licence at the Cathedral"—as this facetious parson called his church.

"Croydon, 1788. Mary Woodfield, al^a. 'Queen of Hell.'"

"St. Peter's-in-the-East, Oxford, 1568. Alyce, the wyff of a naughtie fellow, whose name is Matthew Manne."

A parson may scold his parishioners for half-an-hour out of the pulpit without fear

of anyone getting up to contradict him; but it was too bad to make the register a means of recording petty spite. Of course the entries are often the other way.

Sometimes the religious animus comes in. Christian burial was forbidden by law to suicides, Anabaptists, Catholics, and excommunicated persons. Hence such entries as these:

"Warleggan, Cornwall, 1631. G. Piper, an Anabaptist, tumbled in y^e ground, Feb. 25."

"Toddington, Beds, 1728. Mary Shaw, widow, hurled into y^e ground, Aug. 26."

"Weedon Back, Northants, 1615. W. Badhouse, dying excommunicated, buried by stealth in the nighttime, 29th Jan. Whereupon the church was interdicted for a fortnight."

Such a church had to be "new hallowed," as Saint Mary's, Cambridge, was, after the burial of Bucer, the Reformer.

"Christ Church, Hants, 1604. Christian Steevens, buried by women, Apl. 14, for she was a Papishe."

The old palls still belonging to some London Companies, and to some of the Norwich churches, are but one item in the display which was in use at all but the very poorest funerals. Some of the Norwich palls are curiously embroidered, the souls of the dead figuring as baby-shapes passing out of the mouths of the corpses. Every parish had at least one guild, to which pall and other ornaments belonged, and of which one of the most important duties was the decent burial of its members. Our "Clubs" keep up the same custom; but their flags and scarves are no longer stored in the church.

A wake was as much a thing of course as it is in Ireland, though few were so provident as J. Cooke, of Sporle, Norfolk, who in 1528 put in his will "that myn executors make a drynkyne for my soul, to the value of vi. s. viii. d. in the church." Such entries are rare; yet, when book-seller Beet, of Little Britain, was buried in 1671 in Great Saint Bartholomew's, it was noteworthy enough for entry "that there was no sermon, nor wine and wafers; only gloves and rosemary."

"Undertaker" is quite a new word. Till after 1688, it was applied to those who undertook, at their own charges, to colonise a piece of land in Ireland or the plantations, on condition of getting a grant of it from the Crown.

With the Tudors began in Ireland the

plague of undertakers. Ireland was nearer than America; and, since the Spaniard had found out a "short method" with the Indians, why should not enterprising courtiers do the same with the native Irish?

After the Restoration the name began to be used of those who undertook to furnish funerals, "whereby persons of ordinary rank may for fifty pounds make as great a figure as the nobility and gentry did formerly for more than five hundred pounds."

The wool trade protested: "If the same cloaks, etc., furnish funerals for many years, the consumption of our manufacture will be greatly hindered, and the livelihoods of many thousand families destroyed."

In 1731, it cost his widow two hundred and sixty-nine pounds to get Andrew Carr, senior bencher of Gray's Inn, decently buried; the strangest thing in the bill being that a hearse and six horses only cost a pound; and fifteen pages in mourning were paid only two shillings each; while twenty-one hatbands are charged ten shillings and sixpence each; and thirty shillings is the price of a lute-string scarf, half-a-crown extra being set down if it was for a "divine." The whole bill—given in Mr. Chester Waters' very interesting book on Parish Registers, to which this paper owes many of its facts—is a model of exaction. There are men to help move the body downstairs; men to carry in the leaden coffin; men to carry in the velvet case; men to empty water out of vault; all separately paid for. And to finish off, the stone-cutter and his men, and the brick-layer and his labourer, get gratuities for "expedition." I should think that, though Mr. Carr never thought of having "a drinkin' for his soul," a good deal was drunk that night in his honour, in the parish of Saint Andrew, Holborn.

Of all this, fifty shillings, "paid the information for burying in velvet," might have been saved, had the law been complied with, and woollen, instead of "sarsnet," been used for shroud and lining.

This law was enacted in 1666, "to encourage woollen and prevent the importing of linen," by the same Parliament which, with the wisdom of the men of Gotham, forbade the importation of Irish cattle. Constantly evaded, it was made more stringent in 1678, the clergy having to note the fact in the parish book.

The moment the burial-service was over, the clerk would sing out: "Who makes

affidavit?" whereupon one of the relatives would have to come forward and satisfy the parson that he might make the required entry. Informations were common, for the informer got half the fine, and entries to this effect are not uncommon.

Fees, paid for christenings as well, were long the Curate's perquisite. But where the Rector was a married man, the wife would often insist on going halves. "The Curates' Conference (1641) complains grievously of this. In our own times, a parson's wife has sometimes contrived a silk dress out of hatbands, and has persuaded the undertaker to exchange her husband's gloves for her own size in Jouvin's or Dent's. The following looks as though somebody, Curate or Rector, was breaking the statute of Henry the Eighth, against accepting "corse presents." "Rype, Sussex, 1634. I buried Alice Whitesides, February twenty-second, a stranger, for whose mortuary I, John Goffe, had a gowne of Elizabeth, her daughter, price ten shillings." When a great person died, there was often, in several churches, a sham funeral, duly registered. Queen Elizabeth was buried in as many churches as Lord Anson was made churchwarden in.

On the whole we may be thankful that so many clergy acted up to the advice of Bishop Kennett, of Peterborough (1718), who advised the entering of strange occurrences, which would not otherwise be known.

Weather notes are too rare for those who believe in "cycles." The parish book of Youlgrave, Derbyshire, records in 1615, "the greatest snow that ever fell upon the earth within man's memorye . . . Fyve quarters deep upon the playne. It fell ten times, and encreased until 12 March, without sight of any earth, upon which daye, beinge the Lord's daye, it began to waste till 28 May, when all was consumed except one heap upon Kinder Scout, such lay till Witson week. . . . Upon May-day, instead of flowers, the youths brought in flakes of snow, which lay above a foot deep upon the moores." This severity was followed by a drought, no rain falling till August the fourth, except one shower in June. But this was only local, for "Lankisshyre and Cheshyre had rain enough all sumer; and both corne and hay sufficient."

The saddest entries are those about the plague, preceded as they are by many about various sweating sicknesses, one nicknamed "stop-gallant" (trousse-galant) because it chiefly attacked young folks in full health.

From "the Great Plague," Cheshire and Derbyshire suffered badly. The record of Malpas is a sad one: all the Dawson family died in a month, nine souls, one son having come from London and infected the house. One of the sons, "perceyving he must dye, arose out of his bed and made his grave, and caused his nefew to cast straw therein, and went and layed him down, and caused clothes to be layd uppon, and dep'ted out of this world. This he did because he was a strong man, and heavier than his said nefew and another wench—all that was left alive—were able to bury." It is noted in the Derby register—Saint Alkmund's—that the plague never entered a tobacconist's, tanner's, or shoemaker's shop.

No; I am wrong. Sadder than any of God's visitations are the records of man's wolfishness to man. The hanging of vagabonds "for being Egyptians," under a statute of Elizabeth, not repealed till 1783, is bad enough; but worse still are the witch killings. Of these I know of no entry in parish books. When Bishop Jewel and Sir M. Hale and Baxter denounced as unscriptural any tenderness to witches, such punishments were too much matter of course to be recorded.

Even when Mrs. Hicks, and her daughter aged nine, were hanged at Huntingdon, in 1716, "for raising a storm of wind, by putting off their stockings and making a lather of soap in a basin, in league with the devil" there is no note about it from the parson.

At Coggeshall, Essex, however, is the entry: "1699, Dec. 27. Widow Comon, that was counted a witch, was buried." The poor creature could never have recovered her three ordeals, recorded in June and July, when "she was thrown into the river to see if she would sink, and she did not sink but swam."

And this is as bad as witch hanging. Saint Oswald's, Durham, 1590: "Duke, Hyll, Hogge, Holiday, Seminarys, Papysts, Tretors, and Rebels, were hanged and quartered for these horrible offences, 27 May."

Of penances there are plenty of entries. Sometimes the result was fatal. One woman at Croydon, who stood three days in a sheet, with a paper showing her sin, (1597), died within the week.

We have entries, too, of "Certificates to goe before the King for touching;" but pleasantest of all are the records of quarrels made up between neighbours:

"Twickenham, 1568. In presence of the hole paryshe was agreement made between Mr. Parker and hys wyffe, and Hewe Rytle and Sicyle Daye, of a slander uppon the aforesayde Mr. Parker, April 4."

A week later, in the same place, "Thomas Whytt and James Hern consented to live in Christian love and charyty, or to forfeit to the poor 3s. 4d., being dewlye proved."

Enough to show the stuff that registers are made of. In almost all there is something to repay you for puzzling through the old "court hand." Later on, almost the only notable entries are about "briefs," those collections under Royal recommendation, which, in the form of "Queen's Letters," lasted on till forty years ago. A poor way of getting money; unless they were pushed, the results were too often on this scale:

"Stock Harward, 1708, Apl. 25. Brief for Lisburn, in Ireland, lost by fire, £31,770; collected 7d.!"

When a man was to be bought from slavery, the response was more generous. In those days, Algerine pirates were often seen in the narrow seas, and anyone who went aboard ship felt he ran a risk of capture. Hence, at Scraploft, Leicester, 1679, July twenty-eighth, as much as one pound eleven shillings and three pence was gathered to redeem from the Turks the son of the Rector of Glooston.

When a man worked at it a "statutory brief" paid well. Bowyer, the printer, when his ship was burnt in 1712, raised in this way fifteen hundred and fifteen pounds; but it was a far cry to a place like Lisburn, and so the wise always farmed out their briefs to men who "worked" them professionally, pocketing, we may be sure, a very large percentage of the proceeds.

A last word about baptismal entries.

At St. Edmund's, Dudley, 1539, Sir W. Smithe Clarke, the Vicar, "whose name hath continued in Dudley from the Conqueste," was an astrologer, and gives the hour of his son's birth, and the sign of the day—the middle of Aquarius—of the month, and of the planets of the day and hour. When the midwife baptized—see "Tristram Shandy—the name given was usually "Creature," i.e., of God. Children so baptized mostly died, and were buried as "Chrisoms;" yet we read: "Staplehurst, 1579. Married John Haffynden and Creature Cheseman, young folke, July 19."

Illegitimacy was often veiled in Latin. "Filius terræ" is a favourite form (it was the name also of the licensed jester at the Oxford Act, the old Commemoration); so is "filius populi;" but we find also scape-begotten, merry-begot, etc.; and among foundlings' names, Relictus Dunstan—found in that parish; Cuthbert Godsend, in a Durham church of that dedication; etc.

Perhaps the strangest baptismal entry is: "St. Marylebow, Durham, 1732. J. Graham, a felon, 30 Aug. He was hanged y^t same morn, just after his baptism."

Till Henrietta Maria married Charles, double names were very rare in England, and even then the fashion was confined to Court ladies.

Goldsmith ridicules in his Caroline Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs, the three names which a few vain folk were adopting; yet twenty years later we have the following: "Burbage, Wilts, 1781, Charles Caractacus Ostorius Maximilian Gustavus Adolphus, son of Charles Stone, tailor, 29 Apl."

Strange was the old custom which so puzzles the searcher of records of giving all the sons of a family the same Christian name. Protector Somerset had three sons named Edward, all living at the same time; and there are often entries like this: Raby, Leicest. 1559. 29 Aug. John and John, children of Xtopher and Anne Sicke."

Everybody knows about the Puritan names, e.g.: "St. Dunstan's, West London. 1599. 19 Apl., Repente, child of Thos. Kytchens." On the register at Chiddingfold, Sussex, there are Pious, Freegift, Constant, Faintnot, and Restore, between 1616 and 1631." But the oddest notion was the Puritans' preference of Jewish sinners to Christian saints. Ananias and Sapphira were favourites—a sister of Archbishop Leighton was Sapphira. "Such names bore testimony to the triumph of grace over sin."

Surnames were also used because contrary to Catholic usage; but this was held unlucky by Conservatives like Coke, though Fuller writes: "The good success of many so christened hath confuted the observation."

Of dog-whippers—alias dog-nopers—there are entries enough; an office needed, even where there was, as at Northcape, Lincoln, a "hall dog pew, in which to pen the Squire's dogs during service."

At Loughborough, in 1579, "a lioness brought to be seen of such as would give money to see her" tore a man to pieces.

At Teddington, in 1743, is entered the death of one of those strange beings "who would often eat a shoulder of mutton or a peck of hasty pudding at a time, which caused his death, æt. 36."

Thus under the old system the parson might make his parish book as interesting as a monkish chronicle. He could tell by what form of words, on both sides, a man and wife were brought together again (at Bermondsey, in 1604) though she had married during his long absence; or how, at Saint Martin's, Leicester, 1576, a deaf and dumb man, "with approbation of the Bishop, his Commissarye, the Mayor, etc.," was married in signs, "laying his hande upon his hearte and then on her hearte, and holding up his handes toward heaven. And to show his continuance till his lyve's ende, he did it by closing his eyes, and digging out of earthe with his foote, and pulling as though he would ring a bell." He could even set posterity right as to pronunciation; thus it is esteemed polite to say "Georgeena," but "at Wimbledon, 1616, was baptized the Lady Georgi-Anna, Daugr to the Right Honourable Earle of Exeter."

I say the old system; yet it is not so very old after all. I have heard even scholars ask for fifteenth-century registers, not knowing that everywhere the chronicles of the smaller monasteries (undoubtedly of the nature of registers; for Priors and Abbots were often called on to testify to age, etc., and supported their testimony by the Abbey "memoranda") were destroyed; and that not till 1535, did Thomas Cromwell bring in registration. It was hated as an adjunct of the Royal supremacy; and though in the parish book of Newbottle, a psalm is sung over "the annihilatynge of ye Bysshop of Rome, his long, falsly pretensyd and usurped powres," the "Pilgrimage of Greece," distinctly charged on the King that he meant to levy "ane trybette," on every child at baptism. Sir Piers Edcombe writes to Cromwell that the same idea is deeply rooted in the West. "This mistrust ys that somme charges more than hath byn in tymys past schall growe to theym by this occacyon of specifying namys of crystynynd, weddyd, and buryyd, in a booke."

In 1538, registration was made compulsory; and in all England there are said to be only eight parish books containing the entries for the three previous years. We owe registration (as we do the Reformed Calendar) to the Roman Church.

Cardinal Ximenes, scandalised at the frequency of divorces—people who wished to part having only to say that they were "god sib" (gossips, spiritual kindred through their sponsors)—enacted in 1497, that in the Toledo diocese, at any rate, every baptism should be registered, the names of the god-parents being entered.

SUBURBAN MISERIES.

"MISERIES of a suburb indeed!" exclaims one who is interested in the question. "Then if you don't like our suburb, why not go and live somewhere else?"

And our friend goes on to show that there are still plenty of people who live in London itself, where there are streets, and squares, and rows of houses, still inhabited by civilised people; while here and there are stately piles of buildings, let out in residential flats, and mansions, chambers, "diggings" of every kind, where people may establish themselves in comfort, and within easy reach of the theatres, museums, law courts, and all the rest. And if these abodes are too heavily rented for your purse, there are other buildings of a less pretentious class and yet a good deal superior to the ordinary model lodging, where suites of unfurnished rooms may be had at a moderate cost.

Indeed, there are signs of a certain reflux of population towards its centre, already in progress in London. You may pass along whole streets in the suburbs, once occupied by a prosperous middle-class community, people with smart housemaids, fine white steps, and brightly-polished door-fittings; but now with dismal rows of boards "to let" projecting on either hand, with once trim grass plots all tattered and unkempt, and the neatly trained creepers hanging dishevelled from the walls. A house here and there will be found occupied by a swarm of new tenants. A cheap tailor has set up his shop in the neat breakfast parlour where once Brown might have been seen of a morning, his prosperous face illumined with reflections from the snowy damask and the brilliant electro-plate, while Mrs. Brown in a charming morning wrapper presided over the cosy breakfast equipage. Through the upper windows the sight of strings hung with many-shaped white garments suggests that a laundress has taken possession of the rooms once made elegant by Mrs.

Brown's velvet painting and knickknacks ; dozens of ragged children hang about the doorsteps, down which the little Browns used to trip, all neat and smart, with governess or nursemaid in attendance.

The same thing is going on in other directions ; streets become depopulated ; and yet here are other streets newly risen from their foundations, which seem to be tolerably well off for inhabitants. In fact, two sets of forces may be traced at work ; one which drives people further afield and into hitherto unsettled regions, and another attracting them to the centres of business or pleasure.

But, admitting the advantages of a residential flat or chambers near the centre of the town, yet the tastes of the average Briton lead him to desire some kind of a hovel altogether to himself—his own little compound, sheltered by his own particular fig-tree and a vine which, if it never succeeds in ripening its grapes, spreads itself refreshingly out in leaves. Thus, though sometimes he grumbles, and sometimes rails at his suburb, he goes on living there. The evening air is cool and pleasant after the exhausted super-heated atmosphere of the streets ; and the morning sun, glistening upon the dew-covered lawn and glinting on the gay flower-beds, gives zest to the early pipe and the matutinal reflections. And to the reasonable man, the ordinary noises of the street are not disquieting. The melancholy resonance of the cries of the street-traders, the clink of cans, the sharp fusillade of the postman's knock are no more thought of than the murmur of the distant sea by dwellers on the coast. But the quiet suburb attracts a host of irregular practitioners, who force themselves upon your notice and disturb all your most serious labours.

There are beggars and tramps in considerable numbers, who penetrate to the lower regions, and who persist in appealing to Cæsar from the mandates of cook or housemaid. Give them food, and they wrap it up carefully in an old newspaper and deposit it on your neighbour's doorstep ; relieve them with money, and they come back ere long for more, bringing with them other beggars more objectionable than themselves. Another set of people follow them, as pertinacious, although their object is more laudable. They desire an innocent kind of barter—to relieve you of your old clothes, and give you in exchange some of the glittering contents of their baskets.

Time was when the Jew old-clothesman was a familiar object in the quiet street, and his low nasal croak one of its ordinary sounds. But the many-hatted Hebrew, the painstaking, long-suffering Jew, is no longer to be seen ; anyhow, no longer in our suburb. He may linger still about club houses and in aristocratic quarters, where gentlemen's gentlemen have extensive wardrobes to dispose of ; but humble quarters know him no longer. Keen as he might be at a bargain, he always paid in hard coin ; while the modern practitioner tries to tempt you with vases of extraordinary shapes and colours, or with pots of flowers in gorgeous bloom.

The flower-sellers, again, with their barrows loaded with really splendid displays—all a-growing and a-blowing—generally noisy and pertinacious, they have no sense of moderation, and, if you buy half-a-dozen pots from their stock, persist in trying to sell the whole show ; yet they have an attractive side—harbingers of summer and all that summer brings. But what shall we say to these other dismal spectres showing duskily through the dull fog of that depressing afternoon when winter first comes upon us—those dreadful working men in gangs who have "got no work to do ?" Would they, could they, ever do a day's work among them ?—these wretched, miserable scarecrows, who may be London builders, Lancashire weavers, Yorkshire iron puddlers, according to the circumstances of the hour. But they give one a shiver as they cast wolfish eyes at the evidences of modest comfort and well-being in our quiet suburbs. And how many of these roving bands do we see, and how few policemen ! Verily, to some of the maiden ladies dwelling in our street, the short winter days come charged with fears and misgivings.

Less formidable than these, but more heart-piercing, are the ballad or hymn singers. There are more of the latter than the former, drawing forth in their miserable cracked voices sacred songs of the brightest and most glowing character, while a row of starving children join in dismal chorus. These last are probably hired from some "entrepreneur" of starving children ; but does not the suspicion even heighten the miserable impression caused by the group ?

Like an angel of light, in comparison with these, is the organ grinder, with his box full of cheerful airs. When he comes at the right time, the black-faced little

Italian is not a bad fellow ; and sometimes on a spring morning, say with sunshine in the air, and the first glimpse of the coming verdure, the lilt of some brave old tune makes the heart skip for joy. But, alas ! he generally comes at the wrong time, when somebody is ill, or you are in the throes of writing a pressing article, or are trying a new song, or mastering an abstruse problem. And then there are those terrible machines on wheels that sit down before the house, like a battery of artillery. A high-coloured "contadina" from Whitechapel accompanies the cortège, and the "bambino" is slung in a cradle between the handles of the vehicle ; a turn of the winch, and the overture explodes with a crash that makes the windows rattle, and sets all the dogs in the street a-barking.

Those dogs again—they may be called a self-inflicted misery. Our Towler plays his part in the chorus with as much vigour as any of the rest. But there are certainly an unconscionable number of dogs in our street. When Towler takes his walks abroad, there is a violent disturbance everywhere ; collies put their heads out of upper windows, Saint Bernards bay from the basement, little fox terriers fly viciously at garden wickets, and wizened-looking pugs pant and snarl from every grassy lawn. And there are fights ! The dogs of the streets, indeed, have pretty well tested each other's powers, and avoid unequal combats. But sometimes a strange Towler comes into the street, and then there are difficulties. Every kind of business must be thrown aside, to rush and separate the combatants.

We have German bands, too. The old Major who lives next door but one encourages the villains. At seven o'clock on quiet evenings, when the Major sits down to dinner, he is delighted to hear the opening bars of the march from *Le Prophète*, and crash ! the whole brass, and string, and parchment rush in. The Major is delighted, for he fancies himself at mess once more, and with his old regiment ; but there are others, his neighbours, who have no half-pay to fall back upon, and who inwardly revile the whole performance as they lay their tasks hopelessly aside.

Then there are our neighbours' dear boys—ill-regulated youths, who have got the upper hand over their fond parents, and who perform the part of Mohawks in our gentle neighbourhood : knocking, ringing, and running away on dark nights ; upsetting milk-cans ; and generally doing

everything which they ought not. In winter, they make long slides upon the pavement, in defiance of all municipal laws, and cause unhappy pedestrians to have unpleasant encounters with the pavement.

And although we are mostly quiet, humdrum people in our street, yet we have our raffish spirits. There is a genteel widow over the way, who takes in boarders, and, for a genteel widow, her taste in boarders is something loud. At night—when the quiet members of the community are in bed, unless, perchance, some midnight lamp casts the shadow of an arduous student on the blind—there begins a rattle and a roar of cabs, as one after another of our genteel widow's boarders come dashing home. Then rise voices, shouts, laughter, or noisy disputes with cabmen, or a loud-voiced discussion among friends, all of whom have lost the thread of their argument.

But these are not the only noises of the night. As other sounds die away, hark to the roar and whirl of trains that are threading in and out among the iron ways ; luggage trains noisily hooting, getting up steam, banging huge wooden trucks against each other ; or, sometimes we have all round the dull reports of fog signals—"past two and a foggy morning," the old watchman would have called. And Towler growls ! Is there a burglar lurking in the yard ? Perhaps the man has a revolver, and Towler will pay for his fidelity with his life ; perhaps he has not, and then it will be bad for the man ! Anyhow, there will be trouble. Alas ! after all the miseries of the day, does night even fail to bring repose ?

A CYMRIC COURTSHIP.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS. PART I.

ALL through the six work-days of the week the good folk of the parish of Llan-sawyl, in the county of Carmarthen, were dispersed and scattered far and wide in their lonely farms, cottages, and cabins, among the soft-sloping, grassy Welsh hills.

If you wanted to see a full muster from the remote ends of the largest and most straggling parish in South Wales, the best opportunity would be to go on a Sunday afternoon to hear a sermon by the Reverend David Davies, Minister of the Independent Chapel which stood under the shelter of a wooded slope

on the high road to Llandovery. There regularly, Sunday after Sunday, nine-tenths of the population of Llansawyl and its dependent hamlets ranged themselves in rows on the high-backed benches, their bright eyes and strongly marked Celtic faces lit up by admiration of their old Minister's fervid eloquence in praying and preaching, an eloquence and power which had stood the strain of a forty years' ministry at Llansawyl; indeed, where any man could find such an inexhaustible supply of deep thoughts, and how he could always clothe them in such telling language, was a mystery to all his flock, including that personage whose knowledge was held to be all-embracing—John Morgan, the schoolmaster.

John Morgan himself was a conspicuous person in the chapel, being the leading spirit in a band of energetic vocalists, who sat in a gallery behind the pulpit, and undertook to pilot the congregational fervour through the mazes of florid psalmody so dear to the Welsh rustic mind. John Morgan had an excellent baritone voice, but that was only the secondary reason why he took his place among the chapel singers. The primary reason was that Mary of Ynysau was also a singer, and that it was part of John's long courtship to escort her to and from chapel; to sit close behind her; and to give her the first-fruits of his attention and devotion during the prayers and discourses of the Reverend David Davies. Sunday afternoon in chapel, and the evenings for choir practice, were John's landmarks in an otherwise rather irksome existence; and he ventured to believe that his queen of hearts also looked forward to these periodical meetings, and calculated on the chance ones which might fall in between them, with almost as much pleasure as he did himself.

Mary's real name was Mary Rees, but, as there were at least half-a-dozen other Mary Reeses within a radius of a mile, it was customary to avoid confusion by styling each after her home, or her father's Christian name.

Following out this principle, I have even heard of a man who was distinguished by the addition of his wife's name to his own, Sally-John—which was one way of saying who held the reins of government in the establishment.

Mary of Ynysau was a good specimen of a thorough-bred Welshwoman. She had clear-cut, resolute features, supple limbs, finely developed by plenty of muscular

exertion, a grand mass of black hair, drawn back from a bright, honest face which had been browned and reddened by summer heat and winter cold.

An English farmer's daughter, particularly if she had the cosy fortune that Mary had, would have considered Mary's dress extremely dowdy. She wore, for high days and holidays, a petticoat of homespun linsey, an ample check apron, a black cloth jacket, and a tall beaver hat. Her everyday apparel would be more difficult to describe; for when a girl, however good-looking, spends a couple of hours every day in the cow-house, and a considerable slice of her time in agricultural pursuits, she must adapt her garments to the exigencies of her occupation; and the becoming is lost sight of in the importance of the practical.

However, whatever Mary's appearance may have been to impartial eyes, John Morgan was never tired of declaring that she was not only the best, but also the best-looking, bar none, of all the girls between Llanwrda and Llandovery. This, it is true, was a limited statement, but it included the whole of John's horizon, and was as comprehensive a one as he could make.

Yet, despite his attachment, his wooing had not made any great advance during the three or four years it had been in doing. The first time, now long ago, that he had tried to say something to her about a bidding and a wedding-ring, she had put him off with the excuse that she was over young to think of such things. Submissively he granted that she was right, but felt that the force of such reasoning must yield to Time, the inexorable. Yet when she was turned three-and-twenty, and when no one would have called her too young, she still found substantial reasons for stopping John directly he began to talk on the subject nearest to his heart. Nevertheless, a certain instinct told him that patience and courage would bring their due reward; and he was fully persuaded that Mary of Ynysau, with her clever ways, and her few hundred pounds, would make a wife well worth waiting for.

This was how their courtship stood one October Sunday afternoon, when they walked to chapel together as usual and took their places in the singers' gallery. The sun was shining broadly and benignly over the hills on which the bracken was turning yellow, and the heather brown. The narrow valleys were filled with a soft haze, and the mellowness of autumn spread

richly away into an almost imperceptible distance. It was a strong proof of the high esteem in which the Reverend David Davies was held, that none of his listeners were tempted to forsake him by the bewildering glory of this Saint Luke's summer day.

The congregation was nearly all assembled when the Minister's wife came in and took her seat, followed by a stranger, a girl of about eighteen. An unfamiliar face, by its very rarity, always attracted a good deal of attention in Llansawyl Chapel, and this particular stranger was still more remarkable by the contrast she made with all the other girls present. She was as elegant and natty in costume, as self-assured and graceful in carriage and pose as the smart lady's maid at Dolangleision; but in features the waiting woman could not be compared to the girl who upset the equilibrium of public curiosity that afternoon, and who had bright golden hair which waved crisply round a well-shaped forehead; clear bright brown eyes, shaded by long dark lashes; a well-formed nose; and the daintiest, most wilful little mouth and chin that can be imagined. She was not tall, but her figure was so gracefully proportioned that it gave her the dignity of height. She would have been noticeable anywhere, but among the uncultivated faces and angular figures around her, she looked like a delicate rosebud among thistles.

"It's Master Davies's granddaughter," whispered Margaret of Cwmgoggerddan, in a stage "aside" to her neighbour. "There was a daughter who went to London to get her living, and she married a London body. They both died, and the girl has been with her father's people till now."

Margaret of Cwmgoggerddan was a great authority; in public estimation she stood scarcely second to the Minister. She knew everyone's history and business, no detail of which escaped her observation, or faded from her memory, and her reputation as a book of reference was further heightened by a rumour that she had ways and means of finding out anything that she chose to discover. In fact, had she lived two hundred years previously, she would inevitably have been ducked in one of the still brown pools of the Gleision, and if she had escaped drowning, would have been burnt for her supernatural command over the elements. In the tolerant nineteenth century she was regarded with awe, and consulted on all important occasions by most of her neighbours.

Margaret's epitome of the stranger's history, as it spread quickly from ear to ear, did not lessen the interest with which she was observed. The interest, however, was not reciprocal. The Minister's granddaughter had taken a slow look round the bare chapel, up to its damp-stained ceiling, and down to its unevenly-paved floor. She had included all the people present in this sweeping survey, and then settled herself in her pew, with the conviction—plainly visible in the expression of her curved lips and the shrug of her shapely shoulders—that she was the victim of a public fraud, and that there was no one in the place worth a second look.

When at the beginning of the first hymn a volume of vocalism poured down from the gallery, the girl lifted a careless look towards the singers, which, passing from one to another of them, finally met the eyes of John, the schoolmaster.

John was not a young man whose emotions were easily aroused; his courtship, with its jog-trot ups and downs, had never worked him into a fever of hope or despair. His nearest acquaintance with passion was a kind of satisfactory thrill which stirred his heart when he stole a kiss from Mary, or walked in the twilight with her hand in his.

So when, with the coolness of one who considers his affections at anchor, he allowed his blue-gray eyes to meet for a moment the supercilious scrutiny of those ruddy brown ones, the strange shudder which ran through his veins was followed by a feeling of great surprise. He stopped singing to wonder what those eyes had silently said to set the inmost fibre of his being quivering; and, when his neighbour accompanied a high note with a nudge, by way of reminder that the schoolmaster had deserted his post at a critical moment, he blushed violently and lowered his eyes hastily. But he sang all the rest of that hymn at random, because of an almost irresistible impulse to ascertain if the brown eyes were still looking at him, and because of an inexplicable bashfulness which forbade him to raise his bent head. During the prayer which followed the hymn, he did venture to steal a glance, between his fingers towards the graceful figure below, but in his hurry and confusion he saw nothing.

At last the service was over, and the worshippers streamed out into the last level rays of sunshine, with a comfortable sensation of having fulfilled their obliga-

tions to religion for the ensuing week ; and as they dropped off into groups and couples for the homeward way, the old Minister hurried after Mary and her faithful swain.

"Well, Mary !"

"Well, Master Davies !" was the greeting that passed in the approved fashion of Carmarthenshire.

"I've brought my granddaughter, Eleanor Carroll," went on the Minister, "to make her known to you. She came down from London yesterday."

Mary was a prime favourite with the Minister. So she was not surprised at the distinction ; but she was overwhelmed by the air of fashion and superiority of the Minister's granddaughter. She held out her hand shyly. "How do you do ?" she said in Welsh.

Eleanor took her hand.

"I can't understand you if you talk Welsh," she said with a touch of petulance.

"Ah !" said Mary, her strong accent and hesitation showing how unused she was to speaking anything but Welsh ; "you will be used to speak Sassonaeg. It is John Morgan here, who can speak better than anyone, except the parson of the church," and she glanced with some pride towards her accomplished friend.

A look of embarrassment had clouded John's face as he saw himself thus brought into close quarters with those fascinating eyes. He, too, held out his hand, almost fearing to feel the dainty glove in his broad palm.

"Do you mean that everyone cannot speak English about here ?" asked Eleanor, looking from one to another as if she were being personally injured.

"Indeed, no," replied John. "There are old people here, who only know a few words of Sassonaeg—I mean English—and even in the schools the children have Welsh books."

"Goodness gracious !" cried the young lady ; "what a dreadful state of things. How can people get on without English ?"

"They do not want it much," replied John, feeling terribly humbled by this supercilious treatment of the matter. "All people here speak Welsh alike ; even Sir Evan Gwynne, at Dolangleision, and the other gentlemen and ladies. Welsh is our language, and it is a good language too."

"It doesn't seem to me like a language at all," she replied with a fine disregard of her listener's feelings.

Mary's patriotism was up in arms.

"Nay," she said, "if you only understood it, you would call it a good language too."

"I never shall understand it," replied Eleanor indifferently.

"Then how will you understand the preaching ? The preaching is very fine, and it is always in Welsh."

"And is it always as long as it was to-day ?" she rejoined irrelevantly. "We were in chapel nearly two hours. Even if I understood, I could not listen so long as that."

She was taking her revenge for the dreariness of those two hours. Of her three companions—one felt distressed, the second angry, and the third amazed.

"My child !" began her grandfather in a deprecating tone.

She smiled at him in a way which seemed to John bewitching, and to Mary insincere.

"She doesn't mean all she says, Mary," went on the old man. "She's like her mother was—a saucy little puss."

Saucy pusses, in fashionable attire, were quite out of Mary's orbit of sympathy. She heartily wished that Master Davies had not made an appeal to her for a welcome to his granddaughter.

"Will you come up to Ynysau, Master Davies ?" she felt bound to say.

She said it with a half glance at John. She knew that such an intrusion on their tête-à-têtes was not at all pleasant to him. Perhaps if he looked as if he were disappointed, Master Davies would say "no"—for he was a kind old man. But there was no sign of a ruffle on John's face ; on the contrary, he added his persuasions to Mary's invitation.

"Don't ee say 'no,' Master Davies. Your granddaughter is strange here, and perhaps she's not best pleased at feeling herself a stranger. The sooner she makes friends the sooner she'll feel settled."

"Very true ! very true !" said the old preacher. "She must try and feel settled. She has come to live with us ; haven't you, Nell ? And you mustn't feel strange among us."

Her answer was another smile, which fell more to John's share than to her grandfather's.

"It is all very fine to talk about feeling settled, as if one could settle anywhere, without considering what one is used to," she said to the schoolmaster, as she dropped behind with him, while Mary and Master Davies walked on in front. "Suppose he,"

with a gesture towards her grandfather, "were taken up to London and told to settle there, how do you think he would like it?"

"You speak so quick," was John's answer, "and your English is so different from ours, that I cannot make out all you say."

Miss Eleanor repeated herself with great deliberation and emphasis.

"I cannot say," replied John, slowly. "I do not know how London would suit Master Davies. I have never been there, and I do not know what it is like."

"Never been in London!" she exclaimed, lifting her hands; "ah, well, I can quite believe it to look at you—but it sounds so funny. Shouldn't you like to go?"

"I do not know," replied John doubtfully. "It's very far; but I should like to hear you tell of your life there."

Mary and the Minister were far on ahead now, up the hilly field-path which led from the high road to Ynysau; and while John helped his companion over the many difficulties presented by its steepness, or the occasional brooklets which took their way unceremoniously across it, he did his best to follow the stream of description and reminiscence which she poured forth. If Eleanor was gaining a totally new experience in the capabilities and impossibilities of life, undoubtedly so was the schoolmaster; and while to her each new revelation was more or less of a disappointment or a shock, to him his discoveries brought a bewildering sense of pleasure.

Before they had reached the long, low, whitewashed farm at the top of the hill, the schoolmaster had grown accustomed to the rapid flow of an unfamiliar language; he had grown bold enough to enjoy the glances shot at him every now and then; and he had risen superior to a former prejudice that a well-grown girl ought to be able to jump over a watercourse.

"You've been a long time coming up the hill," said Mary as they entered the house.

"Oh," cried Eleanor, "the road was so dreadful. I am torn in a dozen places. My shoes are soaked and ruined. I have not a gasp of breath left."

"Nay, nay," said John, with a familiarity which struck Mary as having been achieved very quickly. "It wasn't the climbing, it was the talking that has taken your breath away. She has been telling me all about London. It must be a fine place."

"It is well that John Morgan speaks English so well," said Mary; yet in her

heart she felt a little sorry that the schoolmaster was in a position to make unlimited conversation for this petulant dainty girl who despised Wales.

"I was afraid, John," she said afterwards, when she and he were about to say good-night by the light of a crescent moon, "I was afraid you would be vexed when I asked the Minister here this afternoon."

"Why?" asked John, who, instead of making his usual advantage of this opportunity for lover-like demonstrations, was leaning against the gate, puffing absently at his pipe; "why should I have been vexed, if you chose to ask them?"

"Well, you remember you were vexed one Sunday, not so long ago, when Sally of Cefn Teilych came along with us."

"Was I? But then you see, Sally is always on the grumble about her rheumatics and what not—she always makes me cross. She and the Minister don't count together."

"You said then," said Mary, drawing a step nearer, "that you liked having Sundays all to ourselves, just you and me."

It was not often she made advances to him. If she had spoken thus and come up close to him last Sunday, John would have felt that his long suspense was nearly over. But now he made no reply. He went on puffing at his pipe as if he meant to lean against the gate till he had finished it.

"Good-night, John," said Mary at last, breaking a silence which wounded her more than she could have expressed.

"You're in a mighty hurry, Molly."

"No, I'm not; but it's getting late, and you seem to have nothing more to say."

"Well, good-night," he answered, "don't take it amiss I'm quiet. I was thinking of all the Minister's Eleanor was talking of this afternoon." He might have added that he was thinking also of the Minister's Eleanor's eyes, and wondering how they managed to look into his, as Mary's had never done.

"For my part," said Mary, as she went back to the house, "I should not care if the Minister's Eleanor had stayed in London town all her life and never come here with her smart clothes and silly ways."

Poor Mary! She, too, had gained an experience that day.

The quiet, sparsely peopled hill-country, to which the chances and changes of life had brought Eleanor Carroll, is beautiful enough to satisfy the most exacting lover

of Nature ; but Eleanor was not a lover of Nature. She found the placid monotony of her grandfather's house irksome to a degree, and the solitude of the broad simple land unspeakably dreary. When she had unpacked all her pretty dresses, and furnished up all the millinery which had suffered on the journey ; when she had metamorphosed her tiny whitewashed bedroom, and worked a revolution in the little sitting-room below ; she began to wonder how she should endure the daily routine which lay before her, and what would take the place of the thousand and one distractions and excitements she had left behind her.

There was nothing, absolutely nothing, to compensate for the crowded streets and gay shop windows, the theatres, the music, the continual variety. There was not a creature to replace her dozens of friends of both sexes, who all talked the same slang, all affected the same views of life, all moved in the same orbit. It was all very well for her grandparents to talk to her of making a companion of Mary of Ynysau. Mary could not even talk English fluently, and had not begun the acquaintance by looking as if she wished to make herself agreeable.

The schoolmaster was in a position to understand and to be understood ; and he had gone so far as to venture on a little flattery ; and though he was a mere clown with so limited a notion of manners, that he had not even raised his hat when he was introduced to her, he was a far more attractive personage than Bob Rees from the mill, or than another uncanny lout (also named Rees, of course,) both of whom she had seen since her first appearance at the chapel. Yes, the schoolmaster, though she could not quite overlook his tendency to drift into that most hateful of languages, Welsh, was so far better than these, that she began to wish that it would occur to him to come and talk to her a little in the evenings, while her grandfather sat studying his big Welsh bible, and her grandmother knitted and nodded in the big armchair. She sounded the old lady on the frequency of his visits to them.

"He comes now and again, my girl," Mrs. Davies said, "but not very often. You see he has a good bit to do : he farms a bit for his mother in between whiles with his schoolmastering, and then he's courting Mary of Ynysau ; so he's pretty well took up."

"I wish he would come sometimes,"

returned the girl querulously ; "because he speaks and understands English better than anyone here."

"Not better than your grandfer !"

"Oh ! well, that doesn't count."

Mrs. Davies did not agree with this valuation of the Minister ; but she held her peace, and had almost forgotten the conversation, when, the next evening, John Morgan knocked at the door, and enquired if the Minister were at home.

John Morgan and Mary of Ynysau had not met since their unsatisfactory parting the Sunday before, and an uncomfortable reminiscence still haunted them both. This evening John might have gone to Ynysau ; he had, in fact, spent the morning and part of the afternoon in the intention of so doing ; but, when school was over, just as he was leaving the school house the Minister's granddaughter in her dainty costume had passed, had stopped and talked to him for a quarter-of-an-hour about the dulness of her lot, and had finished her remarks by saying : "I suppose you are too busy to ever spare a half-hour to come and cheer a body up a bit." The result of which was that, after milking his mother's cows, John made a far more careful toilet than ever he made to go to Ynysau, and instead of taking the uphill path which led to Mary's home, he followed the Llandovery road a little further, knocked at the Minister's door, and was ushered by Mrs. Davies into the Minister's parlour, into the presence of Eleanor.

The room was a good deal changed since she had come to make one of the household. She had hung smart knick-knacks on the walls, and tied bows of ribbon to the old-fashioned furniture. There was a huge red spider clinging to the faded window-curtains, and a miniature lobster was engaged at acrobatic feats on the side table-cloth. These novelties, Eleanor explained to John when he remarked on them, "were elegant and fashionable ornaments, without which life would be quite too dreary. The old people," she said, "looked on them as confusing, but that was only a sign of their rusticity." To John they were wonderful evidences of the reality of that world of gimeracks which had dazzled his mind on Sunday, and of which he was ready to hear more ; though all the while his patriotic soul was swelling with a desire to assert the virtues of Wales, and to show to these beautiful brown eyes some-

thing which would raise Carmarthenshire in their owner's estimation.

"And will there be real caves in London as well as the mock ones in the theatre?" he asked after a long description of the pantomime of the "Forty Thieves."

"Real caves in London!" repeated Eleanor derisively. "Where do you think there would be room for them in a place like London?"

"Well," replied the schoolmaster, humbly, "if the caves were there, there they'd be; and room would be for them."

"But if you're a schoolmaster, you ought to know that there aren't any caves there."

"Then," he cried, and his face brightened — "then you've never been in a cave?"

"I didn't say so," she replied loftily, as if feeling that her omniscience was about to receive a snub. "I may have been to other places where there are caves."

"Ah," said John, rebuked; "but then, have you? Because, I was going to say, we have caves here, and they might be new to you, and might amuse you for an afternoon."

"Have you really?" replied Eleanor, condescendingly. "I think I should rather like to see them. A girl I knew once went to a place where there were caves. She told me about them; but I forget where it was. She said they were quite dark; and that it was great fun."

"These are dark, too; only we carry candles when we go. They are not like other caves, for it is said that they were once gold mines; that is long ago, when the Romans were masters of the land. Antiquaries have proved that the long galleries were hewn out by the Roman legions, and——"

"Oh, I say!" cried Eleanor; "stop that learned twaddle. What do I want to know about the Romans?"

"I was finished about the Romans," returned John, with Cymric persistency. "I was going to tell you that geologists can trace gold-bearing quartz——"

"I won't listen!" cried Eleanor again, putting her hands over her ears. "I hate being stuffed with school-book sentences. But I do want to go to the caves; and, if you will promise not to be prosy, you may take me, and we will carry candles, and all the rest of it."

"Will you really come?" cried John. "Will you come on Saturday, when there is no school? They are in the hill by Dolangleision; and we can go along a little

way and see the big house where Sir Evan lives."

"Thank you, John Morgan," said the Minister, looking up from his bible. "You are very kind to plan pleasure for the lass. And we'll ask Mary of Ynysau, for I want her to be my lass's friend."

So it was all fixed; and John had to spend another evening at the Minister's in order to settle the hour of the start, and the order of going.

But when Mary heard of the arrangement, she did not feel at all enthusiastic to make one of the party.

"The Minister's Eleanor will not care for the caves, John," she said. "I am sure she will be afraid of messing her fine clothes with damp and dirt."

"Nay, Mary, you are altogether mistaken about her," cried John, on the defensive at once. "I daresay her clothes are smarter than yours or the other girls', but she comes from a place where smart clothes are quite general, and she thinks no more of them than you do of your own."

"I doubt that," returned Mary decisively; "she looks to me just such another as that giddy-headed maid Miss Gwynne brought here four years back; and you didn't call her a sensible girl, though you do stick up for the Minister's Eleanor."

"I see," said John, "you've made up your mind against her."

"I made up my mind against her! Why, I've hardly spoken ten words to her! Why should I be set against her?"

"Goodness only knows; perhaps because you are a woman."

"That's stupid, and——"

"It is very stupid," retorted John warmly. Then there was a disagreeable silence, on account of a great lump in Mary's throat, which checked her next retort. It was John who broke the pause. "Now don't 'ee go and sulk, there's a good lass," he said with the superior tone of one who has had the best of a discussion. "We mustn't squabble over such a trifle as that. Why, the caves, and the Minister's Eleanor, and the Minister's Eleanor's fine frocks, all put together, ain't worth a squabble betwixt you and me."

As a rule, Mary had hitherto tossed her head at such little protestations of esteem from the schoolmaster; but this one was too sweet and too opportune to be flouted. She held out her hand and looked kindly into his blue eyes, and he returned her look, and thought, as he clasped her rough,

toil-stained fingers, how slim and white was the hand which had tied the fanciful bows on the Minister's chair and curtains.

"Then you won't say 'no' about the Dolangleision Caves to-morrow, Mary," he said.

"No, of course I won't, John," she replied with unusual tenderness, and for a moment she forgot the ground of her objection.

HISTORICAL GOSSIP.

EARLY in the present century, the most detested man by lovers of freedom in England and elsewhere was Lord Castlereagh. The Tory Minister for Foreign Affairs in the days of the Holy Alliance was supposed to be the determined enemy of liberty throughout the world; a man of harsh and cruel purposes, ruthless in carrying them out.

When the unfortunate Statesman died by his own hand, many must have been surprised at the evidence given by his body servant at the inquest. "Had he any reason to suppose that His Lordship's mind had been deranged of late?" "Well, his lordship had been a little strange of late." "For instance?" "Well, he spoke harshly to me a day or two before his death." We must agree that this last answer shows Lord Castlereagh in a very different light to that commonly accepted as correct.

"England expects every man to do his duty," is asserted to be as apocryphal as "Up, Guards, and at 'em!" The story goes that the last signal Nelson gave, was really: "Nelson expects every man to do his duty," and that the officer to whom the order was given affected to have misunderstood his directions, and substituted and telegraphed "England" for "Nelson." Southey says that the signal was received by the fleet with enthusiasm; but Southey was not there, and one who was has recorded the equally, if not more, probable fact, that some hard-headed tars could not understand what the signal really meant. "Do our duty!" quoth one of them, "why, in course we shall." And, in truth, the exhortation, however worded, was not one required by British sailors, soldiers, or marines; they always do their duty. Apropos of Nelson, that great man had a temper.

Towards the close of the war with the First Republic, when the general distress was sharp, and bread far dearer than beef,

a curious fashion arose in London, of giving dinners, to which the guests were expected to bring their own bread. Nelson was favoured with an invitation to such a dinner, and, as his host omitted to inform him that he was expected to bring his bread with him, Nelson went unsupplied. Possibly, being just home from sea, the Admiral was unaware of the custom. At all events, when he found that there was no bread, he made quite a little scene, called his servant, and, before the whole company, gave him a shilling, and ordered him to go out and buy a roll, saying aloud: "It is hard that after fighting my country's battles, I should be grudged her bread." One would not like to have been present at that dinner party, still less to have been the host.

Royal personages do not always shine as orators. Saint Simon tells us a good story illustrative of this. "Under the Regency of the Duke of Orleans, the Duc de Berri was introduced to the Parliament of Paris. The First President made His Highness a complimentary harangue, and it was then the Prince's turn to reply. He half took off his hat by way of salute to the Assembly, immediately replaced it, and looked hard at the First President. 'Monsieur,' he began, then gazed blankly around, and began again: 'Monsieur;' then turned appealingly round to the Duke of Orleans for help. The cheeks of the Regent, like those of his cousin, were as red as fire, and he was wholly unable to help the luckless Prince out of his scrape. 'Monsieur,' now dolefully recommenced the Duc de Berri, and again stopped short. 'I saw the confusion of the Prince,' says Saint Simon, 'I trembled, but there was no help for it.' Again, the Prince looked at the Duke of Orleans, and the Duke of Orleans appeared to be intently studying the make and shape of his own boots. At length the First President put an end to the painful scene with as much tact as he could well display. He took off his judge's bonnet with a low bow to the Duc de Berri, as if in acknowledgement of the Prince's unspoken oration, and then opened the business of the session, to the intense relief of all present. On quitting the Parliament House, the Duke paid a visit to the Duchess of Ventadour, where he was complimented on his speech by the Princess of Montauban, who knew nothing of what had happened, and thus ventured on what she naturally supposed to be a safe piece of flattery. The Duke,

now wild with annoyance, hurried away as soon as he could to the Duchess of Saint Simon's. Once alone with that great-hearted lady, and sure of sympathy, the poor fellow threw himself into an arm-chair and burst into tears. Madame de Saint Simon did her best to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and showed, as must be allowed, a touching sense of his own degradation. He bitterly blamed the King and the Duke of Beauvilliers for the wretched education he had received. 'They never thought,' he bitterly exclaimed, 'but to brutalise me; they taught me nothing but to play and hunt, and they have succeeded in making of me a fool and a brute utterly incapable, never to be fit for anything, always to be the laughing-stock and the scorn of mankind.'

A story is told of our William the Third which lacks those very important essentials—time and place. He had sentenced an insubordinate Dutch regiment to be decimated. The soldiers accordingly drew lots, every tenth man, of course, drawing his death warrant. Not unnaturally, one of the drawers of the fatal piece desired to sell the lot he had drawn, if perchance he could find a buyer. One of his comrades at last volunteered to be shot in his place for a hundred pistoles, to be paid to his wife after his death. William, having been informed of this doleful bargain, sent for the soldier, and asked whether what he had been told was true. "Yes," replied the soldier; "I have run the risk of being killed for many years for next to nothing a day, and now that I can secure my wife and children something substantial, I am ready to die." William pardoned the man, and gave him the hundred pistoles.

When General Wolfe was appointed to the command of the expedition against Canada, Pitt invited him to dinner on the day preceding his embarkation. The only other guest was Lord Temple, Pitt's brother-in-law, who afterwards told the story to Thomas Grenville.

As the evening advanced, Wolfe, ever so slightly warmed with wine, or, it may be, merely fired by his own thoughts, broke forth into a loud strain of gasconade. He drew his sword; he rapped the table with it; he flourished it about round the room; he talked of the mighty things that sword was to achieve. The two Ministers stood aghast at an exhibition so unusual from any man of real sense and spirit; and when at last Wolfe had taken his leave, and his

carriage was heard to roll from the door, Pitt seemed for the moment shaken in the high opinion which he had formed of Wolfe; he lifted up his eyes and arms, and exclaimed to Lord Temple: "Good Heavens! that I should have entrusted the fate of the country and of the administration to such hands!"

It has been scandalously asserted of certain English Statesmen, that chance, and not opinion, caused them to take that side in politics in which they have won distinction.

A story is told of M. Berryer, which places him in the same category. When a very young man, with fame and fortune yet to win, Berryer is said to have considered the arguments for Atheism and Republicanism as being quite as good, on the whole, as those for Religion and Legitimism.

He felt, moreover, that for worldly success it was requisite that he should not continue all his life as a doubter, but have some sort of creed. Should he range himself on the side of Church and King, or for "the immortal principles of 1789?" After trying in vain to balance the considerations for and against either belief, he gave up the task in disgust, and decided the course of his life by tossing. He took a "louis d'or" from his pocket, tossed it up and said: "Heads, King; tails, Republic." Heads it was, and henceforth was Berryer a staunch Legitimist.

About as much real belief in religion had Malherbe. One day he gave a beggar some silver, and the grateful wretch assured Malherbe that he would pray for him. "Pray do not trouble yourself to do that, my friend," replied the poet; "judging from your own condition, I should hardly think you had much credit with Heaven."

Apropos of charity, it is related of Robert the Second of France, that one day a thief by the dexterous use of a knife, was cutting the gold fringe from the King's dress. "Stop, my friend," quoth Robert, "you have now half; leave the other half for someone else."

Louis the Fifteenth, the monarch whom the Duc de Berri so bitterly blamed, was extremely kind to his personal attendants; but when he was, so to say, in his official character of King, "aussitôt qu'il prenait son attitude de souverain," as Madame Campan puts it, his aspect would strike awe into the beholder; and persons who had seen him every day of their lives were apt to be as much intimidated as a young lady at her first appearance at Court.

Now it chanced that the members of the King's household claimed certain privileges, which were disputed them by the Corporation of the town of St. Germain's. Anxious to obtain the King's decision on the matter, the members of the household resolved to send a deputation to His Majesty to urge their claims. Bazire and Soulaigre, two of the King's valets, undertook to act as deputies, and obtained without difficulty an audience of the Sovereign. The next morning, after the early levee, Louis ordered the deputation to be introduced, and, at the same time, assumed his most imposing look. Bazire, who was to speak, was almost paralysed with fright, and his knees were loosened with terror. He just managed to stammer out the word "Sire." Having repeated this word two or three times, he was seized with a felicitous inspiration:

"Sire," he once more began, "here is Soulaigre."

Soulaigre, looking unutterably wretched, commenced in his turn:

"Sire — sire — sire," then (oh, happy thought!) ended like his colleague, "Sire, here is Bazire."

The King smiled and made answer:

"Gentlemen, I know the motive which has brought you here. I will see that your petition is granted, and I am very well satisfied with the manner in which you have fulfilled your mission as deputies."

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alicia," etc., etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER VII. ILLUMINATIONS.

MRS. PERCIVAL generally had a tea-party on Sunday afternoon. People had a way of driving in from the country to the far-famed evening service at Woolsborough Cathedral, and River Gate was a very agreeable refuge on these occasions; Canon Percival was always hospitable and gracious, his wife was always charming. Towards half-past six a large party used to stream across the Close from River Gate to the Cathedral, with a certainty of finding good places; for the head verger, the greatest man in Woolsborough, was Mrs. Percival's slave.

On Vincent's last Sunday, only one

party of people came in to tea. They were entertained by the Canon, Mrs. Percival, and Celia, as pleasantly as usual; but they were not interesting people, and they went away early, having brought some visitors of their own with them, to whom they wished to show the Cathedral.

"They wanted you to go with them, Uncle Tom," said Celia, looking up with some mischief in her eyes.

"They must excuse me, Celia," said the Canon. "I cannot act showman for ever, you see; and these good people—you will agree with me that they are a little dull, and that half-an-hour of them is enough. Some of these excellent country clergy don't quite realise that the Canon of a Cathedral, and the Rector of a large town parish, has a good deal to occupy his time, without the self-imposed duty of giving lectures to ladies on architecture. Of course, if people are really intelligent, really artistic, it is a different thing; they are worth a little sacrifice."

"Or really rich, really great, really worth cultivating in any way," an ill-natured person might have added; but there was not one present, fortunately.

"No more tea, thank you, my dear," said the Canon. "I hope you are going to make a disturbance about this tea; there is certainly something wrong in the flavour. Celia, you are looking brilliant. And where is poor Vincent? I must have a talk with my son before I lose him."

"I think he escaped into the library," said Mrs. Percival.

"There I shall find him, probably," said the Canon, and he walked away. Not finding Vincent in the library, he did not search any further, but sat down in his favourite chair and fell peacefully asleep.

The aunt and niece, left together in the drawing-room, were silent for a minute or two. Each of them hardly knew whether she ought to be angry with the other; both of them, being very sweet-tempered, were unwilling to find this necessary. Those good people from the country had arrived almost directly after Mrs. Percival met the two young people in the garden, so that there had been no time yet for any explanation.

"Paul ought to be in soon," said Mrs. Percival, having given her little dogs their bits of sugar and saucers of cream. "How about Paul, Celia? Do you know that I have been very much startled to-day?"

"I hope you have heard nothing about me to vex you, Aunt Flo," said Celia

meekly; her tone now was very different from what it had been in the morning.

"Most likely you know already what I have heard," Mrs. Percival went on talking, moving slowly about the room all the time, while Celia sat still with her hands folded, looking curiously grave and sweet. "Of course Vincent went out to you, after he had been talking to me. Yes, I know all about it, Celia; and I am only very, very sorry that Vincent was not told from the first. He said he ought to have been told, and he was quite right. If he had known from the beginning, this would not have come into his head at all—people don't set their hearts on impossibilities. I am very sorry for the whole affair, and only glad that—that it is impossible, in fact—for your uncle and I could never have consented."

"No; I told him so; of course I am not good enough," murmured Celia with a slight smile.

"You told him this and that," said Mrs. Percival; "but, unfortunately, you did not tell him the whole truth at once, which cost me a trying scene this afternoon. As to your not being good enough, my dear, there is no occasion to say foolish things. You know perfectly well what I mean. But why did not you tell Vincent of your engagement, yesterday?"

"I could not. I told him what ought to have been quite enough."

"Was he reasonable this afternoon? Not too angry, I mean?"

"Not too angry," Celia answered. "We are very good friends now."

"He has been rather spoilt," sighed his mother. "You have spoilt him a little this summer, Celia, like the rest of us."

"One couldn't help it."

"No, one couldn't help it. With all his naughty ways and his temper, there is something so splendid about Vincent. Still I am afraid, Celia—don't you think you might have been more careful?"

"I don't know, Aunt Flo. As you say, one does not trouble oneself much about things that are impossible. How could I ever guess that Vincent would take it into his head to care for a beggar-girl like me? I neither expected nor wished it. I could not have been stiff with him; and you would not have wished that. We have had a very jolly summer," she said, with something like a sigh, "and I don't think it is quite my fault if it has ended in a thunderstorm."

Mrs. Percival glanced at her niece across

the room. The Canon, as usual, had chosen a wrong moment for paying Celia a compliment on her brilliant looks. Celia was tired, worn, and pale; she had not recovered from her bad night; and the second scene with Vincent had been a good deal more exciting than the first. Mrs. Percival was capable enough of blindness when she did not wish to see; but no one, knowing Celia intimately, could look at her now without seeing that she had gone through some straining experience.

"I am sorry, Celia," Mrs. Percival began in a low voice.

"Not for me, I suppose!" said the girl lightly. "Here is Paul."

At the same moment Paul came into the room. Mrs. Percival was startled, for she had not heard his step. Celia went forward to meet him with her sweetest smile, poured out tea for him, asked him about his walk, made him altogether perfectly welcome.

Paul's face was radiant in this sunshine, of which he had not yet enjoyed much. This was a very different thing from arriving all alone, twenty-four hours before, with no Celia to receive him. Mrs. Percival's amiabilities had been no compensation, and her charming drawing-room had been a desert. Now it was Eden once more; and Paul drank his tea in grateful peace. It did not occur to him to find fault with the flavour.

Mrs. Percival walked out on the terrace for a few minutes, leaving Celia and Paul together. She was half conscious of being a little angry with Celia, whose last words to her, "Not for me, I suppose?" had in them, somehow, something of the nature of a slap.

All very fine: but had not Celia herself confessed, long ago, that she was not in love with Paul? Of course she was not; anyone could see that. Paul would see it himself, if he was not ignorant and blind. Supposing that their worldly advantages were equal, who could compare the two men, Vincent and Paul? One was a dear, nice, clever boy; the other, when he chose, was a singularly attractive man. Of course, he could not have married Celia; and if he had been rich, he would never have thought of it. But Mrs. Percival felt in her heart that Celia was very much to be pitied, and refused to believe that Vincent's offer had roused no regret in her at all.

It was the old story of sour grapes; but Celia was indeed foolish if she thought any amount of clever acting would deceive her.

Mrs. Percival had not the smallest wish to alter the course of things; and perhaps she knew in her heart that she was a goose; but that Celia should bring forward a touch of pride, and pretend to be a little contemptuous, instead of flattered, at her conquest of Vincent — this was intolerable, and not to be endured. Neither could the sincerity of such feelings be for one moment believed in. Mrs. Percival carried with her, from that time, a secret conviction of Celia's deep disappointment. In truth, one must suppose she never really forgave Celia for attracting her son, or for pretending not to value the impossible prize that was offered to her.

In the drawing-room, Paul was giving Celia a history of his walk, the ancient church, the modern sermon, his French friend so strangely met, and the interesting talk they had had together. It was impossible to find fault with the way that Celia listened, and her remarks were just what they ought to be. It was not till long afterwards that Paul realised how little he or his doings had ever been to her. She smiled with interest and amusement as she looked at the Frenchman's card, which he pulled out of his pocket.

"But how magnificent!" she said. "Really, it was quite a romantic adventure. I hear the Lefroys often have all sorts of foreigners staying with them. Most people think them dreadful. I am not sure that I don't, Paul, if you will forgive me; you know I am a thorough Englishwoman."

"You wouldn't think my man dreadful," said Paul. "I wish you could see him. But there is something else I want to tell you. As I came home just now, I saw an illumination."

"Really?" said Celia. "Yes, how delightful!"

At that moment she was listening to something beyond Paul, and she looked up quickly at the window. She had heard a step that snatched her thoughts away—Vincent's step; he had joined his mother on the terrace, and they were now strolling up and down together. It seemed as if Vincent had forgiven his mother her sins against him, considering the parting that was so very near.

"It was a regular illumination," Paul went on; her goodness made him so happy that he did not notice the sudden distraction. "I wished you were there. I was coming down the hill towards the bridge, you know—trees in front, and then the

river, and then all Woolsborough on the other bank, stretched along and sloping up in that pretty way it does, with the Cathedral in the middle of it. Everything perfectly clear, and all the houses the deepest red. The sun was right behind me, shining across, don't you see! And the west windows of the Cathedral and all the houses along the river were lit up with a perfect glory of light; they shone gold, dazzling, especially the Cathedral. I'll tell you," said Paul, a little oddly and wistfully, for he was not fond of making his fancies the property of others—"it was just as if angels were holding a festival inside the Cathedral. It couldn't have been lit up so gloriously for anything else."

Then Paul came suddenly down to earth, was seized with a sort of shame and shyness, not caused, certainly, by Celia's gentle listening, made a dash at the cake, and begged her pardon for being so hungry.

"And are you very tired?" she said, "or will you come to the Cathedral with me to-night? Don't be led away by Dr. Chanter; I want you to take care of me."

"Then that was what the illumination meant," said Paul.

Celia laughed. She got up, and as she walked away from the tea-table, lingered a moment and laid her hand on his shoulder. He was starting up, but Celia's fingers were very strong, and seemed to keep him where he was. The people on the terrace had wandered away out of sight for the present.

"Be still," said Celia. "I wanted to tell you—Vincent knows. My aunt thought she had better tell him."

"I'm awfully glad to hear it," said Paul. "I hate a secret. Thank you; that is good news. And—I'm afraid he thinks you are throwing yourself away—doesn't he, dear?"

"I don't exactly know what he said to her," answered Celia, with a dreamy smile. "He congratulated me. But he is rather cross at not having been told before."

"I don't wonder at that, you know," said Paul; and he got up in spite of the gentle restraint, took her hand from his shoulder and kissed it, and laid it back there again as he stood before her. "Sometimes I can't believe it," he said. "It is too wonderful to be true, and I shall never deserve it, if I live as long as Methuselah."

"Yes, you will," she said, "if you are as good as you were to-day."

"How was I good to-day?"

"In going away for all those hours, because I asked you."

Paul laughed.

"Little you know what I would do for you!" he said.

"Even wear dead flowers, which is sentimental, and a thing I hate," said Celia; and she pulled the shrivelled carnation from his button-hole and threw it aside.

All this time she would hardly meet his eyes, and anyone less dazzled than he was, knowing her as he did, would have been aware of a restless, absent uneasiness of manner, increasing every moment, as she stood there with her young lover, and heard a distant sound on the terrace—familiar footsteps slowly approaching, a murmur of voices in the gathering mists of sunset.

Almost immediately she left Paul and walked quietly to the other end of the room, to the farthest window, reaching it just as her aunt and cousin came up to it from the outside. Mrs. Percival was very pale; her eyes looked odd, as if she had been crying. Vincent was now perfectly calm and quiet; it seemed as if he had resigned himself to the inevitable. He hardly looked at Celia, but walked down the room towards the door, passing close to Paul by the way.

"I hear you are in great luck," he said to Paul, stopping for a moment.

"Thanks; yes," said Paul.

"I congratulate you," said Vincent.

Paul thanked him again, and he went straight out of the room.

Paul thought once more that Vincent was the most disagreeable man he had ever met.

But he forgot all drawbacks and annoyances that night in the Cathedral. The dim, soft light, the dreamy arches, the mysterious world of shadows, those high spaces into which organ and voices seemed to float away, losing themselves; the high and holy gentleness of all the service, which seemed to make no demand on souls and ears, except peace to receive what so came so peacefully; the great congregation—for all respectable Woolsborough flocked to its Cathedral in the evening. There came a time when Paul ceased to find much reality or devotion in these services; but at present he was young and happy, and able to live on dreams. He and Celia were alone together, to all intents and purposes; and somehow it seemed to Paul that she no longer objected to be seen alone with him. It was a comfort that Vincent knew: soon everybody would know; and then it would not be long before life changed into

something almost too beautiful to think about. Behaviour in church was not exactly Celia's strong point; but that evening Paul thought he had never seen anything so lovely and heavenly as the abstraction of her face. She sat looking a little upward, all through the sermon; not at the preacher, but away through the great shining screen into the half-lighted solemnity of the choir. She might have been looking straight into Paradise, with that sweet, pure, thoughtful, unconscious, exaltation of gaze and expression. It was something new to Paul; he had never seen her look like that before.

"How beautiful she is!" he thought over and over again.

His thoughts of her went on mingling with the sermon, to which he could not help listening. The preacher was a young man, who had lately been made Vicar of a large town parish in the diocese, and was already known all over England for his life and his words, which matched each other to an unusual degree. His eloquence had a special effect on young men, who crowded to hear him everywhere; in his own town they would leave their shops and offices in the middle of the day, and come to his church to hear a short address. That night at Woolsborough he was preaching about martyrdom; and as he talked on, almost everyone in the Cathedral became aware that in his or her own nature there was something, a power of some kind, which under certain circumstances might rule supreme. Then there would be a discovery that love meant sacrifice; and to those who knew what love was, martyrdom would follow naturally.

The listeners listened, Paul among them: all, no doubt, had their different thoughts. He thought what a poor thing his own love was, as far as he knew it; and yet he thought he could die for Celia. But the preacher carried him on to higher worlds; and for a few moments he even forgot Celia.

They lingered afterwards, to listen to Dr. Chanter's playing, and when they came out of the great porch into the starlight, the streams of people had nearly passed away.

"Celia," Paul said, as they crossed the Close, "it was an illumination, and at least there was one angel there. You looked like one."

"Don't," she said quickly. "I hate you to talk like that. An angel! In a year you will think me a fiend."